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THE PLOTTER

CLACKAMAS COUNTY AREA T/S
USERS GROUP
NEWS LETTER

VOLUME 6

**

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MAY 1988

EDITED BY: DICK WAGNER
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V/CHAIRMAN: BILL DUNLOP
SECRETARY: JACK ARMSTRONG
TREASURER: ROD GOWEN
PR OFFICER: BOB EVANS
LIBRARIAN:

MEETING

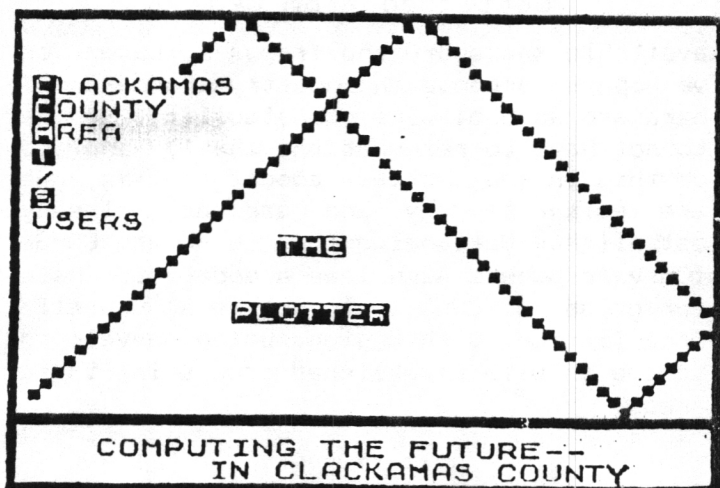
The MAY meeting will be:

on: FRI., MAY 13 1988

meeting room open at: 7:30 P.M.
in: COMMUNITY ROOM
FAR WEST FEDERAL S & L
OREGON CITY SHOPPING CENTER

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS ISSUE

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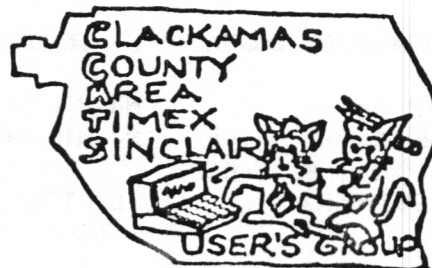
S. N. U. G.
Sinclair Northamerica Users Group

During one of the organizational meetings of the recent Sunstate Timex/Sinclair Winterfest '88, the idea of a National organization for the advancement of Sinclair computing came up. It was decided that since we had developed a "core group" that was dedicated to promoting Sinclair computing, we would attempt to lay the groundwork for such an organization. It was also mentioned that the greater the amount of time from the departure of Timex from the computer industry, the less of an active market would result. Since we would have users from across the nation at the Fest, it would be an ideal time to make our plans known. So, the Sinclair Northamerica User Group, or SNUG (a name submitted to us by John Cushran, and later modified by Bill Jones) was starting to come closer to reality.

WHAT IT IS

The intent of SNUG is to provide a forum for exchange of ideas. It would be a source of information, such as a listing of active members, active Users Group, Sinclair specific Bulletin Boards, an active library of Public Domain software, and a listing of

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by Jack Armstrong

available shareware and freeware. Later on we hope to propose an industry standard of hardware and software compatability. So as to not have to reinvent the wheel, and to do this in the shortest amount of time, we are going to try and use an already established National group, such as CORSA (Corvair Owners Assn.) as a model to base our group on. SNUG would act as an umbrella Organization, with Regions being developed to tie in with established groups in those areas.

WHAT IT ISN'T

It is the intent of the organizers NOT to infringe or supercede any already established User Group or Vendor. It is intended to show some strength to the industry that Sinclair is not dead, and the mere fact that we can get this Organization together will prove that we can stick together and grow and prosper. We look at this as an enhancement to activities that have been planned on. Hopefully a Northamerica Calendar of events could be established to help co-ordinate any future plans and events. It is not designed to take anything away from anyone.

WHAT TO DO

We need the support of EVERY SINGLE SINCLAIR USER! Whether you reside in Canada, the U.S., or Mexico, or for that matter anywhere, we need to know how you feel and what you want in this Organization. This is your opportunity to be heard...your comments, criticisms, complaints, or praises. What we have here is nothing more than an idea. Nothing at this time is set in concrete. We are more than open to suggestions. To make it work, these ideas of yours have to be forwarded immediately. We are putting on a time limit until June 30, 1988. If there is no support, then we will not proceed further. If there is input, we will update on a monthly basis to whoever will put the information in print. So, lets hear from you soon!!

TEMPORARY CONTACT FOR INFORMATION:

MEL NATHANSON
7515 ARBORDALE DRIVE
PORT RICKEY, FL 34668
(813) 863-5552

MARY LYNN JOHNSON
190 HICKORY WOODS CT
UNIT 3C
DELTONA, FL 32765
(305) 860-2465

At 7:45, Chairman Mike Carver called the meeting to order. Old Business brought comments on the minutes from a prominent member who shall remain nameless by his own request.* Dick Wagner gave comments on the trials of being an Editor: misplaced items, and the usual problems encountered. A discussion followed touching on Word Processors and Spelling Checker programs. The minutes were approved. Also under Old Business reports were made on the progress of the Third Annual Great NW T/S Mini-Fair. Mike downloaded info from the BBS. D. commented on the InfoComm NL and the lack of mention of our Fair. Rod said Bob is sending out the press releases in May. D. reported that thier subscription rates have been adjusted. Under New Business, Mike reported that the BBS messages have mostly been from out of state. He also commented that we should be using the BBS more and wondered why there was not more participation. During the discussion that followed it was decided that to overcome the reluctance of individuals to try the system it would be helpful to give some practical help in the form of a class or seminar. The group gave enthusiastic approval to starting this in May following suggestions from Tim and Mike. Gaylen stated that it would help to have explanations of Protocols and how they work in practice. Mike stated that Rod's was easy to use and it was proposed that modems be brought to meeting and it was ascertained that Merlin would need an Auto-Dialer for his 1000. D. brought out the fact that there are probably 100 BBS's in the Portland area. Mike stated that Peg-board has a TS section. He also reported that M-Term and Loader IV are the best. A general discussion of modems and their use followed. Rod gave Mike a letter from SNUG to read that gave a proposal on a national user group that is being offered. They want feedback from any and all who are interested--both on a group level and as individuals. Part of the idea is to creat a forum for the exchange of ideas, freeware, shareware, tips, tricks, hints on pro-

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gramming, etc. They want our participation! Write to them by contacting: Mel Nathanson, 7515 Arboresdale, Drive, Port Richey, Florida 34668, or you can call them at (813) 863-5552. The members opened a discussion of the possible function of such an organization: an umbrella organization for user groups or one for all users as individuals were possibilities offered. How it would be financed was another question raised. Would there be a group cost? An individual cost? Would there be a BBS? D. suggested that dealers and manufacturers pay for mailings and it was suggested that there be input from users outlining good and bad features of hardware and software and suggestions on how to improve both. A new face was introduced by Bill Dunlop: his friend Bill Weyeneth. Weyeneth has a portable 1000 powered by battery. He also has a brother who attended meetings some years ago. Dick Wagner reported on a call from Harold Thompson who has a 1000 with 16k Rampack for sale. Contact Dick if interested. D. is making a trip east. He reported on Sino Business Machines--he still has only minimal info. Rod gave some bad news on A+: they are going to quit selling QL's. If they don't sell 200 to 300 units immediately they will turn to Germany. That will end availability in the U.S. Chip costs are given as the reason for their decision. Rod also gave a report on the Fair. There is a modest sum available from last year and he has booked several dealers already. So far, there has been small response from user groups. He stated that Tim would give an opening oration and that the scheduled time for lunch is 12 to 1:00. The Larken system will be demonstrated along with new items from Larken. (This writer has just added the RAMDISK to his collection; 7 interfaces hooked on the rear; it is FANDAMTASTIC! Remember 16 minute loading times--No More!) Tim reported Fred Nachbauer is developing a TS Clone that will incorporate CP/M, 80 cols with 1000 and 2068 modes. When Rod finished his report, Mike called on the group which gave Rod a round of applause for his fine work and dedication. Adjournment was at 9:45. *O.K., Syd?

BITS & BYTES

by: ROD GOWEN

Heard any TS related news lately? Did you get any information in the mail from other users, user groups, or vendors that may be of interest to our readers? If so, why not share it with us? We need all of the help that we can get. Please send any info that you might have to: Rod Gowen, C/O CCAT/S, 1419 1/2 7th Street, Oregon City, OR 97045, or, phone in at: 503/655-7484, 10 AM- 10 PM weekdays. I know that the entire user group will appreciate it!

QLs GONE??--We don't know for certain yet where they will be, but you can be certain that what the existing dealers have in stock will be all there is! If you put off buying one until now, and IF you still want one, you had better get in touch with your favorite dealer and order one. As the supply dwindles, the price is sure to go up! A+ Computer Response, the "so-called" distributor or the QL, said that they had received 4 or 5 offers to purchase the entire stock. One was from Germany, one from the UK and 2 or 3 from within the U.S.. At least one of the U.S. offers was from someone who had a specific purpose in mind for all 800+ of the remaining QLs. We will just have to wait and see.

LARKEN ELECTRONICS--has, as reported earlier, released the 256K RAMDISK and now Larry has been at work on the utility programs for his DOS. He and RMG Enterprises will be offering a TASWORD II conversion that will make use of the LKDOS system and the interrupt mode of the 2068 to allow you to be printing one file while you are typing in another file. At an output speed to the printer of 60 CPS, you will not notice any slow down in typing speed. If you are using a hi-speed printer, you will notice a slow down in its speed. The TASBUF CONVERSION will run \$10 on disk from RMG Enterprises. (Plus shipping) It should be noted that it will only operate with the LARKEN RAMDISK or with the AERCO LKDOS systems.

LEMKE SOFTWARE-had announced the release of PIXEL PRINT PROFESSIONAL DTP and RMG is, as a dealer for LEMKE, going to sell it if they ever get a working copy to test out! It will be a great package from the sound of it. We look forward to further word.

TMX-64-The new BBS package due from ED GREY ENTERPRISES which was promised for release in late November of 1987, has not yet arrived on the scene. We spoke to Kurt Casby, the author of the program about the middle of March and at that time he was trying to iron out some bugs in the final program. He has arranged with ED GREY to offer a special upgrade price to all of the legitimate owners of CASBOARD BBS software. We will have to wait to see just what that "special" price will be.

SANDY PCP LTD-of England has announced the release of a new SUPER SUPER Q BOARD. The new board will have all sorts of goodies on board. It reportedly will sport the added memory, ToolKit II, SPEEDSCREEN as well as a HARD DRIVE CONTROLLER! The reported retail in the U.S. will be around \$600.00. Keep watching.

RMG ENTERPRISES-reports that SPEEDSCREEN and FLASHBACK are now in stock for your QL. If you are interested, give them a call.

MIRACLE SYSTEMS-the makers of the TRUMP CARD for the QL, also have a couple of other cards up their sleeves. The ACE CARD is a 256K version of the TRUMP CARD-everything the same except that you end up with only 384K of RAM and the TRAY CARD that is for those who already have the 512K EXPANDORAM and want the features of the TRUMP CARD. These are available from your friendly QL dealer if you want to ask.

MINIFAIR NEWS-is reported elsewhere in the newsletter. We are wondering why we have not heard from more than 1 or 2 user groups. We know that you other user groups want to support the TS community and the MINI-FAIR. Let's hear from you!

MINI-FAIR NEWS

by: ROD GOWEN

Well, here we are with only a bit over 3 months to go until the BIG NW MINI-FAIR and things are going pretty well so far. We have had such a good response from the vendors that we had to "knock out the walls" and add another 1080 square feet of space to the exhibit area. We now have room for 46 tables, of which there are 14 left at this writing. The Seminars are looking good so far. We have not heard from many of the people we would like to see be on the agenda, but I am sure that we will hear from some of them soon. To date, the vendors who have paid for their tables are:

RMG ENTERPRISES
TIME DESIGNS MAGAZINE
ZEBRA SYSEMS
SHARPS INC.
ED GREY ENTERPRISES
JACK DOHANY
VARIETY COMPUTERS & ELECTRONICS
(formerly VARIETY SALES)

We are at a loss to explain why, with all of the talk in various newsletters from many user groups, of "supporting the TS community", we have not heard from more than a few user groups. To date the following are the only ones to have paid for tables:

CCAT/S-Clackamas County Area T/S group, your hosts.
VISTA-Vashon Island Sinclair/Timex Association of Vashon, Washington, a group with only about 5 members!

We are not asking that you ATTEND the FAIR, just that you SUPPORT IT! By that we mean, pay for 1 table or even 1/2 table, send 100-200 copies of your group newsletter with a subscription form inside. With 300-500 people expected to attend and pick up a copy of your newsletter, you are sure to pick up some new members or subscribers. CCAT/S has a lot of outside people reading our newsletter. We have heard from the

Las Vegas group that their newsletter editor will be attending and I hope that they decide to get a table. Continued on page 5

We know that there are at least 3 groups in the San Francisco Bay area. What are you doing? We need your support. The vendors need your support. The speakers need your support!

We can also use a few more speakers! We have, at this time, a total of 7 speakers penciled in for the 2 day event. We need a total of 12 spots filled and would like to do it with 12 different people rather than having any one person do more than one seminar. If you have a subject that you feel that you are somewhat of an expert in, AND would like to share your expertise with other TS users, PLEASE get in touch with me! Subjects so far covered are: A QL OVERVIEW, QL ARCHIVE, 68000 PROCESSOR, GIF/RLE GRAPHICS, 2068 TELECOMMUNICATIONS and Z80 MACHINE CODE. We need speakers on such subjects as: QL TELECOMMUNICATIONS, DISK SYSTEMS/PERIPHERALS FOR THE QL, FOR THE 2068, DESK TOP PUBLISHING, PRINTER INTERFACING and SOFTWARE/HARDWARE DEVELOPEMENT. If you know someone who might like to speak on these or other subjects, let me know.

The vendors have opened up and are donating many fine door prizes, it would be nice if some of the user groups and even individuals who write or produce software or hardware would volunteer some door prizes to be given out at hourly intervals during both days of the FAIR. How about a subscription to a newsletter? How about a copy of your program? Get in touch with me, I'll pass it on to the prize committee.

RMG ENTERPRISES will be video taping the 12 seminars and will be offering both video and audio tapes of the seminars from the FAIR for sale after the event. Get in touch for more info if you cannot make it and would like a copy, or, if you just could not sit through all 12 of them and would like to see them later. There will be 2 video tapes (VHS only) or 6 audio tapes. Watch for ads in Time Designs later this fall.

More news next time!

LARKEN LINES

by: ROD GOWEN

Sorry I missed you last month!

Just a case of too much to do and not enough hours in the day. I am sure you know how that is!

No matter! I am back! It will be a rather short column this month, as I am again strapped for time. It is now 4:10 AM as I write this and I plan on going to bed by 5:30 AM!

Quite a bit of news on the Larken front to report. Since our last full column, the 256K RAMDISK has been released and is being used by a lot of folks who are VERY HAPPY with it! We hope to have a review in the next issue from our own Jack Armstrong. Watch for it! The system is very easy to use and really gives you that added "space" so that you can, in effect, have some of your favorite utilities and/or programs "in residence" at all times. For instance, I am using it with 128K and I have all of my Larken disk utilities in it along with Tasword II with which I am now writing this column! I can turn off my computer, and, when ready to boot up again, simply hold down the "J" and the "ENTER" key while I turn on the power switch and "PRESTO!", almost INSTANTLY, the menu appears and with the touch of just 1 key, I can reload Tasword, Larken Disk Editor or any one of 6 other utilities in less than 2-3 seconds! I can hardly wait until I get it expanded to 256K!

I want to stress a point here.

WHO NEEDS IT???

Maybe nobody does. But then again, that is what I always used to hear about computers; "Who needs one?" If you are not using any form of mass storage beyond the cassette recorder, then YOU NEED IT more than anyone else! I am of the firm belief that if you have not yet gone to a disk system or to

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stringy-floppy, then you are the one who will benefit the most from having the NON-VOLATILE MEMORY SYSTEM on your 2068. You can then as I do, install your most used programs and utilities in the outboard memory and still SAVE data and data files to the cassette. It takes 2.38 minutes to LOAD TASWORD II from a cassette! It takes almost 2 minutes to LOAD ProFile 2068 from tape. Time it! How long does your favorite program take to LOAD? Wouldn't it be nice to have it up in under 5 seconds??? Check into it.

Another new product from LARKEN is on the way soon: THE SEQUENTIAL FILING DISK. Larry tells me it will be just a few weeks and it will be ready to go. In the meantime, he has written a conversion for TASWORD II that will allow you to be typing one file while the 2068, using the interrupt mode to send another file to the printer. Making use of the NON-VOLATILE RAM BOARD or, if you are using the FD-68 Aerco I/F and LKDOS, it will also work. The conversion program will be sold for \$10 plus shipping and will be easy to MERGE into your TWII program.

I have also heard that BYTE POWER, the Canadian cassette 2068 bi-monthly magazine is now including LARKEN LKDOS based programs on their tapes. They also produce a GREAT DISK UTILITY SYSTEM for the LARKEN system. The D.U.S. is available from BYTE POWER and from RMG.

I hope to have more good news and even some tips, hints and a review or two in the issues to come.

Let's make LKDOS #1!

PROBABILITY

Dick Wagner

Probability theory enters into coin tossing: ie "heads or tails" out of so many tosses. The counting rules for the possible outcome of a 2-outcome trial is 2^n where n is

the number of trials. Thus if there are 3 flips the possible combinations would be HHH, HHT, HTH, THH, HTT, THT, TTH, TTT which is 2^3 or 8 combinations. This is describes in an article in ZXAPPEAL, April 86, called PASCAL'S TRIANGLE, which includes a short program to generate the possible combinations for tries ranging from 1 to 8 flips. The combinations are calculated and the calculations produce the chances of each combination appearing.

PASCAL'S TRIANGLE---

Blaise Pascal, a French philosopher and mathematician of the 17th century, was for a time interested in games of chance. This interest led him to discover certain important rules about the probabilities of getting heads or tails on the toss of a coin. His findings are described in a triangle formation of numbers which shows easily the chance of getting heads or tails, or any combination of them, on a given number of tosses of a coin.

After running this program you can examine the triangle for these probabilities for as many as 8 tosses. If you make one toss, the chance of getting heads is 1 out of 2. If you toss 2 times your chance of getting 2 heads is 1 out of 4; of getting 1 head and 1 tail, 2 out of 4, and of course 2 tails is 1 out of 4. If you make 3 tosses you get the combinations given in the first paragraph.

```

10 PRINT "PASCAL'S TRIANGLE"
15 PRINT "First column=Number
of Selections"
18 PRINT "second column=Total
number possible combinations"
20 PRINT: FOR N=1 TO 8
25 PRINT N;" ";2^N;" ";
30 FOR R=0 TO N
40 LET C=1
50 FOR X=N TO (N-R+1) STEP-1
60 LET C=C*X/(N-X+1)
70 NEXT X
80 PRINT C;" ";
90 NEXT R
100 PRINT:PRINT
110 NEXT N

```

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

As an opener, we have lost Syd Wyncoop from our user group. He has changed jobs and is now in the Los Angeles area. Syd was a spark plug that kept us going with new ideas. Sure sorry to have to report this.

It is hoped that the Pascal Triangle program is tried by a few readers because I have a problem I haven't solved and maybe someone will give me an answer. No. 1--how to get the left column nicely arranged as a right justified column, and No. 2-- how can the triangle be printed in a pyramid shape.

An article named "DOC? My computer has a VIRUS!" appeared in the April 1988 issue of CTM magazine. It was authored by a Dwight Purdy. It seems that a few smart hackers found something to do besides invade other people's computers via modems and AT&T. They sell programs on the open market that do you in because the programs include a regenerating MC program within a good utility program. Or maybe you copy a program from a BB. It is a great program that does almost everything. BUT after using the program periodically, the computer operating system begins to act up. Before this you have made a few copies for friends. Their systems also begin to malfunction.

Here is how it operates in a utility called COMMAND.COM. It operates first when you ask for a directory. It makes a copy of itself and increments a counter. Bingo, now it has multiplied and it starts writing zeros into the sector at the beginning of the disc that includes the directory space. So you have saved a couple of copies of COMMAND.COM for files and they do the same thing. Just think of all of the files that could be damaged by including this slick program on various discs or even cassetts. How about a hard disc with megabytes of storage you can't access?

For most of us T/S users this would not seem to be a problem except that we do buy programs and do obtain them from BBs. Thus we could be giving sanctuary to such a program.

Another couple of articles appear in the April issue of TS-2068 UP-DATE magazine, Bill Jones' quarterly publication, that

address a similar problem that was unintentional but none the less frustrating not only to Bill but to a few customers. As I understand it, under ordinary use a particular program worked fine but when the Oliger (SAFE DOS) MERGE/ command was used with this program it appeared that the MERGE was taking place but it didn't actually happen. John Oliger found that 363 bytes were missing in the program and just a bunch of gibberish showed on the screen for the missing lines.

What happened to Bill could happen to any of us. Have you had a bad load that left a bunch of question marks at the end of the program? I imagine such a thing could happen on a SAVE from a power glitch (like a refrigerator or washing machine starting), a few stray POKES perhaps, etc. John Oliger has an interesting explanation-- "Because the way Basic programs are stored, saved, and loaded on the 2068, once something like this occurs and the program re-saved (even on cassette) it will forever exist because as far as the computer is concerned it is part of the Basic program, even tho it can't use it or LIST it".

If you suspect a problem just check with PRINT FREE immediately after power-up, and then after loading the program and removing it with CLEAR: DELETE , just make another PRINT FREE. If there is a difference between these 2 numbers then you have a problem. John goes into detail on how to clean up this kind of a problem. Read the full report in the April UP-DATE magazine (there is a copy in the library).

There is a lot of good information to be had from the UP-DATE magazine, including the Ramex SPDOS, a section on Larken DOS and other Larken products, Oliger's SAFE DOS and other selected subjects. It seems to me that our 2068s are really being worked overtime with all of the wonderful programs and hardware available to it. In fact reports of power supply overloading with associated computer damage are becoming common statements. How about a hardware article on this subject!

A last item is the possible start of a national organization to coordinate user groups, programmers, suppliers, and hardware manufacturers. Our members were very much interested in this and will be watching for signs of progress.

ON THE SOAP-BOX AGAIN!

by: ROD GOWEN

My turn to again mount the old "soap-box! I am again going to complain about the use of mini-print in newsletters and magazines. I, and I am sure that there are alot of others out there that share my feelings, will refuse to even TRY to read these items. As an example of what it is like for me, try to read this without straining your eyes! If you have no trouble, then YOU are the one that the editors of the newsletters and magazines are aiming at. Not those of us with a slight disability. Adding insult to injury is the fact that a lot of these offending publications have VERY poor copying machine quality and the poor quality of the copies I receive (too light, too dark, gloppy) make it well nigh impossible for me to get anything from them. Had enough? O.K...Might I say, as I step down from the box, that I am aware that larger print takes up more space and that more space requires more paper and that more paper costs more in postage. However, I would not mind paying for the extra cost of postage IF I COULD READ WHAT I AM PAYING FOR!

I do not say that our little publication is the best, or that it will always contain "earth-shattering" news. BUT!...Of one thing you can always be sure.... UNLESS YOU ARE ALMOST TOTALLY BLIND, YOU WILL NEVER HAVE TO STRAIN TO READ IT!!!

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